

With regard to proceeding 02-230, the plan to forcibly implant copy-protection technology in digital television receivers, I am firmly against it. In my opinion and experience, this proposes laws that are inherently unenforceable, would dampen technological development, constrain artistic freedom and, last but by no means least, cost taxpayers more.

Unenforceable because computer hackers have been bypassing such copy protection since the earliest days of the PC, for example, with the copy protection on Lotus 1-2-3. Since this is a US regulation, viewers could also circumvent it by simply using foreign materials.

It would dampen development and constrain freedom because it specifies a technology. This creates a fixed item in a playing field that is otherwise unhampered. Anyone with a new idea or a new way of expressing it, say, in an interactive way, will have to deal with this implanted technology that involves broadcasting, a one-way medium. It can also be used to invade people's privacy, since the devices would have to contain unique codes, identifying their owners. This further constrains freedom of expression.

It will cost taxpayers more, first of all to set up the infrastructure and to purchase the new receivers. Enforcement would cost taxpayers money, particularly since the copy protection is essentially unenforceable.

--steve kotrch